

Common Physical Ailments in Men

Everyone needs to take care of their health, but research shows that men are less likely than women to see a healthcare provider when they are not feeling well.

There are several common health issues that men need to be aware of in order to help with early detection, prevention and effective treatment.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is also known as hypertension. According to the American Heart Association, an estimated 103 million U.S. adults have high blood pressure. That's nearly half of all adults in the United States.

Risk factors for high blood pressure include:

- Family history of high blood pressure
- People over age 35
- Overweight people
- People who are not physically active
- People who consume too much salt
- People who drink too much alcohol
- People who have diabetes, gout or kidney disease.

As hypertension is a risk factor for other ailments, such as heart disease and stroke, it is important to get regular screenings.

Heart Disease

One in every four people die from heart disease each year. More than half of those deaths occurs in men. Half of the men who die suddenly from coronary heart disease have no symptoms, which is why it is important to get regular screenings from a doctor.

By maintaining or treating the risk factors, men can decrease their risk for heart disease. Risk factors include:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- High LDL cholesterol
- Family history
- Excessive alcohol use
- Physical inactivity
- Poor diet.

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

(GERD)

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) is a condition where the contents of the stomach leak backward into the esophagus. This can irritate the esophagus and cause heartburn.

Alcohol, smoking and obesity are all risk factors for GERD. Some medications — such as calcium channel blockers for blood pressure and tricyclic antidepressants -- can also make heartburn and gastroesophageal reflux worse.

Oftentimes, GERD can be reduced by avoiding foods that trigger the heartburn (such as fried foods) and taking over-the-counter medications. Talk to your doctor about possible treatments.

Low Testosterone (Low-T)

About 5 million American men have low testosterone. Testosterone is the most important male sex hormone. Having low testosterone can affect a man's libido, physical features and mood.

Low levels of testosterone are linked with aging, as the body makes less testosterone as it ages. Low-T is also linked to diseases that affect the hypothalamus and the pituitary glands.

Prostate Cancer

All men are at risk for prostate cancer, but older men, African-Americans and men with a family history of prostate cancer are at the highest risk.

Most prostate cancers are slow-moving and do not cause apparent health problems. However, different people have different symptoms for prostate cancer.

Symptoms of prostate cancer can include:

- Difficulties urinating
- Weak or interrupted flow of urine
- Frequent urination, especially during the night
- Pain or burning during urination
- Painful ejaculation
- Persistent pain the back, hips or pelvis
- Blood in the urine or semen

These symptoms may be caused by other conditions, but speak to your doctor right away if you have any symptoms that concern you. Regular screenings can also lead to early detection of prostate cancer. Men with a family history of prostate cancer should discuss screenings with their doctor at age 45 and most men should begin screenings around age 50.

Basic Prevention

Though many physical ailments occur as a part of aging, there are several that can be prevented by making health a priority.

Use the following guidelines to proactively take care of your health:

- **Get some sleep.** Lack of sleep can lead to many conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and depression. Adults need about 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.
- **Quit smoking.** Quitting smoking has many immediate and long-term benefits, including lowering the risk of heart disease and cancer.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Make sure your diet is rich in fruit and vegetables. Limit the amount of sugar, salt, fat and alcohol you consume.
- **Relax.** Try to ease stress by staying active and connecting socially with those around you.
- **Exercise.** Adults should get at least 2.5 hours of exercise each week. This can help prevent osteoporosis, high blood pressure and obesity.
- **Get wellness checkups.** See your doctor regularly and get the recommended preventive care in order to help diagnose issues early or stop them before they become problematic.

Resources

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- MedlinePlus: www.nlm.nih.gov
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://healthfinder.gov>

Here when you need us.

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